

Networked Learning Communities

learning from each other

learning with each other

learning on behalf of each other

Principles



National College for School Leadership

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Introduction

01

The National College for School Leadership (NCSL) is committed to developing collaborative, capacity-building and sustainable learning programmes. The Networked Learning Group is one illustration of this commitment. The Group has established programmes of work informed by a series of core learning principles. These underpin the designs of all our programmes – which include Networked Learning Communities, New Visions and Collaborative Leadership Learning.

Strategic purpose

02

It is only through doing the work that we can learn more about 'networked learning'. The programme's strategic purpose is to generate this learning - about networked learning, knowledge management and learning exchange - for the programme and for the wider system.

Networked Learning Communities is a development and research programme.



04

There is a body of work on network theory and a small, but growing, number of studies into educational networks.

Starting from what is known

05

Amongst the many things that we know about networks from research, the following seven elements appear to cross cultural and geographical boundaries. These are all incorporated into the NLC design.

They are that:

- people unite around compelling ideas
- values-based (or 'value chain') networks are the most enduring
- networks require facilitation
- networks create new patterns of leadership - "leadership as cross-cultural brokering"
- networks balance insider and outsider knowledge
- leaders have to model the learning
- 'joint work' projects form a foundation for sustained relationship-building.

Principles and characteristics

06

We have wrestled with the terms 'the work' and 'the programme'. The work is what networks do and it goes on with and without support. The programme is the ways in which NCSL adds value to the work of networks and to the body of knowledge about 'networked learning'.

The unique characteristic of the programme is '**networked learning**'. NLCs are committed to 'learning from, learning with, and learning on behalf of each other'. Networked learning applies particularly to 'learning on behalf of each other'. We can add value to the networks and learn more about 'networked learning' through the exchange of learning (or knowledge management) processes.

'**Learning exchange**' is the dimension of the work that relates to the ways in which learning is drawn from what networks do and know, from beyond the programme (publicly available knowledge) and from the collaborative study and enquiry processes within and between networks.

These 'learning exchange' processes involve accumulating and making sense of the learning and re-configuring it to make it dynamically useable – both for those within and outside the programme. This process of generating dynamic representations of learning within NLCs and the wider system is a key contribution of the programme.

We seek for good work to be done and to learn from the doing - within and beyond the programme.

There are six strands to the basic framework of the Networked Learning Communities design and, in addition, three non-negotiable principles which underpin the work.

The scaffolding

09

The six strands are:

- **Pupil learning**
a shared pedagogic focus
- **Adult learning**
with professional learning communities as the aspiration
- **Leadership learning**
at all levels, but particularly collaborative headteacher learning
- **Organisational / school-wide learning**
progressive redesign around learning principles
- **School-to-school learning**
and between communities of practice
- **Network-to-network learning**
a 'programme' task.

The three non-negotiable principles are:

- **Moral purpose**
a commitment to success for all children. ('Raising the bar and closing the gap' is a social justice representation of the same theme)
- **Models of shared leadership**
for example, co-leadership
- **Enquiry**
evidence and data-informed learning.

A model of learning

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The programme is committed to inside-out change processes; to coherence-making through joint learning; to sustainability and capacity-building; to reflective, problem-solving and knowledge-creating approaches. We seek to act out co-constructed learning and contextual enquiry.

The template that we apply to all the work is drawn from the parity that we attach to three fields of knowledge. These are:

■ **Practitioner knowledge**
we start from what people know, the knowledge that people bring to the learning table

■ **Publicly available knowledge**
the theory and research publicly available to be drawn in to learning environments

■ **The knowledge that we create together**
through collaborative enquiry.

There are many elements to the learning models within Networked Learning Communities.

The way in which we have configured the Networked Learning Group's (NLG) operations is intended to support the conceptual and practical constructs of the programme.

Operational design of the Networked Learning Group

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The three operational components of the Networked Learning Group are interdependent.

They are:

- **Network Consultancy**

the medium through which we support, understand and draw learning from the work of networks

- **Operational Consultancy**

the adaptable and flexible mix of support services that provide capacity for the programme

- **The Learning Exchange**

both noun and verb, it is the medium through which we both symbolise and realise learning exchange practices and principles.

All NLC team members are located within one of the elements, but also operate in at least one more. In other words, we may be a fieldworker in Network Consultancy, but what we are learning from our 'field intelligence' is a key contribution to the Learning Exchange. If we are in the Operational Consultancy then, by definition, we support Network Consultancy and Learning Exchange processes.

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